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A

LETTER

TO THE

PARISHIONERS OF ST. SAVIOUR'S,

Leeds,

BY THE RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF RIPON:

WITH AN

APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS.

LONDON:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE.

1851.

L O N D O N :
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE,

A

LETTER,

&c.

Palace, Ripon, May, 1851.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

It is impossible for me to review the events which have occurred in the parish of St. Saviour's since the consecration of your church, without feelings of real sympathy with you, under the various trials and perplexities in which you have been, from time to time, involved. And my concern in the events is the greater, because I have myself been instrumental in exposing you to some of them, by severing from you, on two different occasions, ministers whose self-denying labours, especially at a period of prevailing pestilence, had united some of you to them by the bonds of a strong and grateful affection. But believing, as I had full reason to do, that their minds were infected with dangerous errors in point of doctrine, I was compelled by an imperative sense of the

duty I owed to yourselves and to the Church, to exercise acts of discipline, which, imperfectly informed, as you doubtless were, as to the extent and magnitude of the evil which I was remedying, would be regarded by you with much of sorrow and surprise. The justice, however, of all my misgivings as to the dangerous tendency of those principles and practices, has been fully manifested by subsequent occurrences, since five, out of the six clergymen to whom I allude¹, have now openly embraced the corruptions of the Church of Rome; and have thus sufficiently proved how culpable I should have been, and how negligent of the spiritual interests of yourselves and your families, had I not interfered in both instances, by my influence and authority, and protected you from dangers of which you were hardly sensible. The language in which I addressed you in the beginning of the year 1847², is still more applicable at the present time; and if I had then reason to make the assertion, I have still stronger grounds for now assuring you, that “you are, yourselves, scarcely conscious of the dangers you have escaped; and, that it is for me, as your spiritual father, to step forward

¹ Rev. Richard Ward, Rev. George Case, Rev. Thomas Minister, Rev. George G. Ll. Crawley, Rev. S. Rooke—besides the Rev. G. McMullen and the Rev. Mr. Coombes, both of whom officiated temporarily at St. Saviour's.

² Reply to the Address of the Parishioners of St. Saviour's. Jan. 22, 1847.

in your behalf, lest your affection for the individuals should blind you to the perilous tendency of that system which it has been attempted to establish at St. Saviour's, foreign as it is to the spirit of our Church, and calculated gradually to familiarize you with many of the reprobated sentiments and practices of the Church of Rome."

Nor can I refrain from lamenting the failure that has thus far attended an undertaking which, when it was first proposed to me, I could not help regarding as an unlooked-for opportunity of providing for the spiritual instruction of the inhabitants of one of the most destitute parts of the town of Leeds; and I was then willing to hope that it would promote the great objects which I had in view, when I laid the foundation of your school, four years previous. Happy, indeed, would it have been for the Church, and for yourselves, had you continued under the teaching of that diligent and affectionate pastor³, who in those early days, instructed you in the pure verities of the Catholic faith, without tempting you into the perilous paths which lead to Rome, or encumbering the Ritual of our Reformed Church with pompous ceremonies, at first, perhaps, intended to illustrate, yet never failing, ultimately, to obscure the truths which they would symbolize.

But, even prior⁴ to the consecration of your

³ The Rev. George Hills, M. A., Incumbent of Great Yarmouth, and Honorary Canon of Norwich.

⁴ See Appendix, p. 21.

church, I had too manifest indications of the tendencies it was wished to foster there : and it was not long before I discovered that it was the object of the founder to try an experiment ; to force a system of his own imagining, copied to a certain extent from mediæval practice, upon the Church at Leeds. I forewarned those engaged in it, that such an attempt would only serve to hinder rather than help the progress of the Church of England among the destitute population of the West Riding : and the result has fully confirmed my predictions. As regards the district itself, the amount of the congregations proves the poor success that has attended the effort, while the alarm and antipathy it has excited, has alienated from the Church of England many who would otherwise have been embraced within her fold.

Meanwhile, many of you, as I have observed, were scarcely sensible of the consequences likely to result from such a system ; and, in reference to this point, I cannot but feel that you have been somewhat hardly used by many of your spiritual guides. Where persons are well versed in the niceties of theological language and controversy, they can easily detect any fallacies or mis-statements presented to them, and can reject the erroneous impressions which would otherwise be conveyed by the ambiguity of language. But the mass of the population of St. Saviour's district had almost every thing to learn, and would be generally

unable to discern the subtle mischief lurking, as well in the language addressed to them, as in the ceremonies practised in their church; or to detect the fallacies thus presented to their minds. My own experience of the teaching at St. Saviour's enables me to explain to you what I mean. Those who are acquainted with the expressions sometimes used by our earlier divines, are well aware that the term "sacrament" is occasionally applied by them, in a lower and secondary sense, to some of the more solemn ceremonies of our Church and sacred functions of her ministers, though they were not ordained by Christ Himself, and not invested with any outward sign of inward grace given. In this lower sense, are the ordinances of marriage and absolution sometimes mentioned as sacraments. Presuming upon this fact, one of the preachers who has lately addressed you from the pulpit of St. Saviour's, has taught you that confirmation, absolution, unction, holy orders, marriage, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, are all sacraments; no line being drawn between those outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof, and "those five commonly called Sacraments" (as our XXVth Article declares) which "are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly out of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life

allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism, and the Lord's Supper." Now our received notion of a sacrament is, that it is one of those means of grace which are generally necessary to salvation; and the impression naturally produced upon your minds must be, that it would be just as dangerous to neglect extreme unction, as to neglect Baptism or the Lord's Supper: and, remembering the teaching of another of your Preachers⁵, you would draw the inference that you were as much bound to come to a priest for private absolution before receiving the Holy Communion, as to go to the Holy Communion itself. Again, the word "penance" was sometimes used in earlier days to signify "repentance." It is now generally understood to mean certain outward acts of mortification and self-inflicted pain. But, I find you have been instructed that "penance" is the means of forgiveness of actual deadly sin; and that deadly sin after baptism must end in spiritual death, unless "penance" be resorted to⁶. It is possible that the preacher might mean "repentance," when he used the word "penance;" but, I have no doubt, that the idea conveyed to your minds would be, that the voluntary infliction of some pain or privation on the body was as necessary to salvation, as the exercise of faith and

⁵ Appendix, p. 36. (Extract from sermon of Rev. S. Rooke.)

⁶ Appendix, p. 50.

real repentance. Once more ; each individual who partakes of the Holy Communion does, in one sense, offer a sacrifice to God ; the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ; as well as the reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice of himself, his soul, and his body ; and, in a secondary and inferior sense, every act of worship is *propitiatory*, as tending to procure and perpetuate our reconciliation with God, through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Under the colour of such expressions as these, you have been taught that so often as the Holy Communion is celebrated, there is a sacrifice made for sinners at the altar, which aids them in obtaining pardon⁷ ; your minds are thus prepared to believe in a local corporeal presence ; so that our blessed Lord, clothed with his human body, and sitting at the right hand of God, (where we are taught He is to remain until He comes in glory to judge both quick and dead,) is nevertheless corporeally present, is corporeally sacrificed and offered up so often as the Holy Eucharist is celebrated. You are thus easily led on to pay the most profound adoration towards the table of the Lord's Supper, which you are taught to regard as an altar upon which your Saviour daily descends to be offered up once more as a victim ; and, when you have advanced thus far, another of your ministers is emboldened to preach

⁷ Appendix, p. 50. 3.

to you the undisguised doctrine of transubstantiation⁸. I will adduce one more instance only of that insidious mode of teaching, which has been gradually preparing you for the full adoption of Romish error. Because private confession and absolution are, in some special cases and under circumstances of special limitation, allowed by our Church, authority has been claimed for the practice of pronouncing it a duty incumbent upon all who wish to come to the Holy Communion, to address their private confessions to a priest, and receive private absolution from him previously⁹. I need say no more to prove to you the absolute necessity which was laid upon me, of banishing such dangerous teaching from my diocese, even although I knew such a step would inflict much pain upon many a grateful heart; nor will it now, I trust, be difficult to persuade you that those are not in truth your best friends who would endeavour to perpetuate these evils among you; who come and tell you that nothing is to be altered in that ceremonial which has been the handmaid to such delusions as these. Your eyes must now, surely, at length be opened to the danger of such a system; and you will thankfully accept such changes in the mode of conducting your services, as shall deliver you from the snares which

⁸ Appendix, p. 50. 8.

⁹ Appendix, p. 36. (Extract from sermon of Rev. S. Rooke.)

that novel ritual laid for your feet. From the recurrence of the dangers to which you were exposed under the ministry of your late deluded teachers, it will be my duty to protect you, as far as in me lies ; and I earnestly hope, both for your sakes, and for the sake of those who may come to minister among you, that I shall not be met in that spirit of evasion and resistance which characterized the dealings with their Bishop of the parties who have lately deserted their flock, and have openly embraced those errors for which they were preparing you and your children.

As however, before their departure, they used their utmost endeavours to prejudice your minds against myself, in the matter of the investigation which I instituted as to their alleged principles and practices, it is right that I should give you the opportunity of judging how far their censures upon their Bishop's conduct were merited.

They have reproached me for affording them so short a time between the announcement of the charges and the inquiry. It was for their sakes that I named an early day¹: for what accused party, who was conscious of his innocence, would not wish for an early opportunity of meeting his accusers face to face ? And if they now plead that the notice was too short, why did they not remonstrate at the time,

¹ See Appendix, pp. 29, 30, 31, for further particulars on points connected with the statement of the St. Saviour's clergy.

asking me to postpone the investigation till some later period, that they might have more leisure to prepare their defence, instead of leaving me to conclude that they were quite willing to enter upon the matter at once, and were satisfied with the course I was adopting? But as they now plead want of preparation, it might be supposed that some symptoms of it must have been evident at the time. Far otherwise: they had a great array of witnesses on the spot; and the moment the examination of the first adverse witness was finished, there were parties ready to be produced, who should invalidate his testimony, and pronounce him unworthy of credit.

They endeavour to leave upon your minds the impression that I had engaged a legal gentleman to examine and cross-examine on the side of the accusers, and had not allowed the accused to have a similar advantage on their side. This is not the fact. I brought with me (as every Bishop does on such an occasion) one of my officials to act as my assessor; and in this instance, I requested my deputy-registrar, Mr. E. J. Teale, to take down the evidence, and to see that it was done in a regular and legal manner. It was not his province to examine, or cross-examine, the witnesses—that was the business of the accusers and the accused, each being left to make the best of their own cases as they could. Mr. Teale, who was taking the evidence, asked only now and then such questions as were necessary to elicit the exact meaning of a witness, before he entered his

answer on the minutes. The well known high principle and integrity of that gentleman, are quite sufficient to vindicate him from having allowed himself to take part in any sinister proceedings; and it was remarked by one present, in reference to the few questions he was obliged to put, that if he had been retained on the side of the St. Saviour's clergy, he could not have done them more service than he did, from the evident impartiality with which he acted on the occasion.

Again, they would lead you to believe that I had purposely summoned, as my assessors in the inquiry, such of the clergy of Leeds as were the "most active and keen partisans" against them. Now, Dr. Hook was present, as rural dean and vicar of the parish of the vestry of which the inquiry was held; but to the best of my recollection, he never opened his lips during the ten hours that I sat there. The Rev. E. Jackson was present, as clerk in orders of the church in the vestry of which we were assembled; and he certainly did not break silence until an assertion was made by Mr. Minster, which, from facts with which he was acquainted, seemed to him to involve dishonesty and equivocation. All the other clergy were avowedly present as accusers; and to reproach me with having summoned those parties to assist me in the investigation, is as reasonable as if the criminal at the bar were to reproach the judge with having been so unfair as to summon, as his assessors, the adverse counsel, and

the adverse witnesses in the cause. I simply bade the accusers meet the accused face to face: the accused well knew that the rest of the clergy present, whom they have designated as active partisans, had come prepared to adduce charges against themselves, and were not summoned by me for any other reason than because they had announced their intention of making those charges.

The authors of "the Statement" have asserted, that facts important to their justification were omitted in the minutes of the evidence, and that the entire evidence, and even name, of one witness, are left out. They do not give the name of this witness, and profess themselves unable to supply from memory the facts which were unrecorded. Such charges as these it is impossible to meet in any other way, than by a simple assertion, that my own memory is equally unable to supply these alleged omissions of important facts; I must beg leave therefore to doubt, until proof be adduced, that any such facts have been omitted.

I am charged with having permitted one of the accusing clergy to swear in my presence. I can merely deny all consciousness of any oath having been so taken by him; and assure you, that the rest of the clergy present have emphatically contradicted the truth of the assertion to this effect, in "the Statement" put forth by the accused.

I believe I have now gone through every particular on which any charge of "unfairness" has

been grounded by the complainants²: and seeing the very grave character of those imputations, you would imagine, that at the close of proceedings which they have thought fit to characterize as a mere mockery of justice, they would surely have evinced some signs of indignation, some marks at least of dissatisfaction. Quite the reverse. At the conclusion of the investigation, Mr. Minster was the first to rise and tender to me, in the most courteous manner, his thanks for my conduct throughout the inquiry! I am reluctantly, therefore, driven to the conclusion, that had my decision been favourable to the accused, my proceedings would have been commended as a model of fairness—an instance of the promptest justice. But knowing, as you well do, the way in which they have since stigmatized them, I leave yourselves, the diocese, and the Church, to judge how far they have obeyed the apostolic precept of “speaking the truth in love.” For my own part, I shall refrain from saying more, than that their conduct has verified, in a remarkable and very painful manner, the statement which I had made in my episcopal charge three months only previous, that “the nearer persons approach to the Roman system, the more will their powers of judgment be perverted, their moral sense blunted, and an obliquity of moral vision superinduced, blinding them more and more to the simplicity of Christian truth,

² See Appendix, p. 31, for further details.

and estranging them more and more from the sincerity of Christian practice³.”

And what more striking evidence of this can be adduced, than that which you have yourselves so recently witnessed in the conduct of those ordained ministers of the Church of England, your late pastors, who one day professed the most affectionate attachment for their flock, and declared that by their Divine commission they stood in the place of God, dispensing to you pardon and forgiveness by the power of the Keys; the next, openly deserted those objects of their professed affection, and even ridiculed the high pretensions on which they had before insisted with such apparent earnestness and solemnity. You, indeed, and others, may have been surprised at the suddenness of their departure; to me it was no matter of astonishment, knowing, as I well did, the lengths to which they had advanced in Romish doctrine and Romish practice, and being persuaded that they would scarcely venture to confront the indignation that would assail them, if they attempted to remain where they were after such discovery had been made.

Towards persons so grievously fallen, the feelings of compassion and of pity are the most natural and becoming. Their fall, however, will convey a very valuable lesson, not to yourselves only, but to

³ Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Ripon, in September, 1850.—*Rivingtons*.

others also. On you it cannot but forcibly impress the danger of any approach towards the errors of the Church of Rome, while it reconciles you to the loss of spiritual guides who have proved themselves unworthy of your attachment, in having tampered with your highest interests, and brought you into such imminent peril. To many others, it will, I hope, give a timely warning, that if they choose to venture into paths which have proved so often fatal, they can have no security that their own footsteps slip not in like manner; that if they will lead themselves into temptation, they must not expect to be delivered from evil; that falling by insensible degrees, they are likely to be given over to a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

After such painful experience as you have had in the history of your former ministers, I can have little fear that you will forsake the Church of your fathers, wherein the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, for a Church which forbids free access to God's holy Word, and suffers you not to "search the Scriptures," in obedience to your Saviour's will; which would rob you of half the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, withholding the cup of which your Saviour has said, "Drink ye all of this;" which bids you worship as mediators and intercessors, deceased mortals who cannot hear your prayers, still less answer them, to the neglect of the one only Mediator

between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ ; which enthrones the Virgin Mary as the queen of heaven, making her a principal object of adoration and worship.

That you, my Christian friends, may be preserved from such dangerous deceits as these, and may be enabled to walk, by a living faith, in the paths of safety and of peace, wherein Holy Scripture and our Church would guide you, is the sincere prayer of

Your faithful and affectionate father and friend,

C. T. RIPON.

POSTSCRIPT.

London, June, 1851.

THE publication of this Letter has been delayed, until the decision of His Grace the Archbishop of York was known on Mr. Beckett's appeal against my Revocation of his licence. His Grace has now confirmed that Revocation; and I can only regret that Mr. Beckett did not accept the offer I have repeatedly made to him, of retiring from his curacy, in order to place himself under some discreet Clergyman, in assisting whom he might regain that confidence in him, which his acquiescence in all the recent proceedings at St. Saviour's has so materially impaired. To have passed over, without the most serious animadversion, such proceedings in the matter of confession as were elicited during the investigation, would have been tacitly to sanction the existence, in my own Diocese, of some of the chief evils of the confessional. It is not for me to discourage such communications between a pastor and his people, as the latter may voluntarily seek for purposes of spiritual edification: and as regards the

subject of private confession and absolution, a fair interpretation of the language of our Church, as quoted by me in my letter to Mr. Minster, will meet all exceptional cases. But should any proceedings, tending either immediately or remotely to make confession and absolution the rule and not the exception, be attempted in my Diocese, they will meet with my strenuous opposition. If such be permitted, it will be in vain that our Church has in her present Prayer Book, advisedly and significantly omitted those directions on the subject, by which in a former Liturgy she sanctioned their general use.

C. T. R.

APPENDIX.

As it may be profitable to introduce a more detailed account of the history of St. Saviour's than could be well given in the Letter to the Parishioners, I subjoin the following elucidation of some of the points touched upon in it.

Previous to the consecration of St. Saviour's church, which took place in the autumn of the year 1845, a very lengthened correspondence had been carried on between Dr. Pusey and myself upon various points connected with the decorations and arrangements of the church. Among other objectionable matters earnestly insisted upon by him—such as stained glass, representing the Virgin Mary crowned; another design, in which the Virgin Mary was seated in the centre, and the Apostles kneeling round her as the Holy Ghost descended upon each (for all which Dr. Pusey strenuously contended, but which I refused to allow;) there was an inscription on the communion plate, containing a prayer for the dead; a wooden cross of some feet high, which it was proposed to place over the chancel screen; and an arrangement whereby the prayers were to be said either within or just in front of the chancel screen, the officiating clergyman's back being turned to the congregation. I refused to consecrate the church until I was satisfied upon all these points. The cross, therefore, was not put up over the screen. Compliance with my injunction respecting the place from which the prayers should be said, was promised; and it was settled that the officiating clergyman should face the south, if prayers were said east of the congregation—or face the east, if they were said in the centre of the nave. The prayer for the dead was ultimately erased from

the communion plate, and every other point was yielded, not, however, until the correspondence had lasted for nearly a year, and swelled to the size of a thick octavo volume.

Notwithstanding the directions given as above, an attempt was made by the first incumbent, the Rev. Richard Ward, to carry the officiating clergy within the chancel, and to have the whole of the prayers said from that part of the church which is separated from the congregation by a massive wooden screen. I interfered, and the evil was redressed.

On All Saints'-day, 1846, the Rev. G. McMullen, of Oxford, preached a sermon in St. Saviour's church on the intercession of saints, which contained certain passages that I censured; and on the 1st of January, 1847, the Rev. Mr. McMullen, offended at this censure, and three laymen with him (two of whom had been living at St. Saviour's), joined the communion of the Church of Rome. Having the greatest reason to be dissatisfied, as well on points of doctrine as of ritual, with many of the recent proceedings at St. Saviour's, I induced the Rev. Richard Ward, the incumbent, and his remaining curate, the Rev. George Case, to resign their respective offices. Thus, within about fifteen months after the consecration of St. Saviour's, had matters arrived at such a point, that it was deemed essential to effect the removal of all who had taken part in those proceedings. The Rev. George Case joined the Church of Rome about a year since. The Rev. Richard Ward joined that communion within the last six weeks.

Dr. Pusey and his co-trustees proceeded to appoint to the vacant benefice.

The Rev. A. P. Forbes succeeded to the incumbency; but being elected before long Bishop of Brechin, the Rev. Thomas Minster was appointed his successor, and was instituted to the Vicarage in April, 1848. A few months after this, I had reason to suspect that a regular system of confession was taught and practised at St. Saviour's. From the great secrecy enjoined on those who were submitted to it, there was great difficulty in obtaining distinct proof; but having, both by correspondence with Mr. Minster and in conversation with him, ascertained his views, and having explained my own, I thought it better, in

January, 1849, to address the following letter to Mr. Minster, in answer to a long one on his part, in which he quoted passages from various divines of the Church of England, who spoke of confession and absolution as part of the system of that Church, and who therefore, as he contended, bore him out in the practice which he advocated.

“ Palace, Ripon, January 23, 1849.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I should have communicated to you before this my judgment upon the defence you have endeavoured to establish in behalf of your avowed practice of regular private confession and absolution, had not other transactions connected with St. Saviour’s meanwhile come to my knowledge, upon which I thought it better at the same time to animadvert.

“ I have carefully considered the justification you have attempted, of your acknowledged system of periodically confessing your parishioners, and then administering the form of absolution extant in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick ; but in all the arguments you adduce and authorities you quote, I find nothing whatever to support you in your proceeding, although you assert (but without offering any proof) that the Church of England strongly recommends the practice (as I understand you to mean) of habitual and periodical private confession and absolution.

“ You bring forward many quotations from individual divines of the Church of England, to show that, in their opinion, the practice referred to is allowed in our Church. The sum and substance of them all may be fairly considered to be expressed in the passage you quote from Bishop Morton’s Catholic Appeal. Indeed this may rather be taken as a fair sample of the whole, because it is the deliberate enunciation of the system of our Church in controversy with a Romish antagonist ; and the tenor of the argument would lead our champion to state his case as strongly as possible in that direction which would most favour your views. He states that ‘ the power of absolution, in general and in particular, is possessed in our Church ; where, both in the public service, is proclaimed pardon and absolution upon

all penitents; and a private applying of absolution unto particular penitents, by the office of the minister.' We have here reference obviously made, first, to public forms of absolution in the Daily Service and Office for the Holy Communion; and, secondly, to the particular cases specified in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick, and in the Exhortation to the Holy Communion. In this statement of the author's, I of course entirely acquiesce, and acknowledge that there are certain rare and special instances in which our Church sanctions the practice of private confession and absolution. But, as regards the former of the special cases referred to, you cannot fail to have observed how carefully fenced and guarded is the permission there expressed. The conditions are such as will assuredly make it a case of very rare occurrence. The special private confession of the party's sin is to be invited only if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter; and the form of absolution which follows, is only to be used if the sick man humbly and heartily desire it. But, mark how entirely you deviate from the wise and cautious counsels of your Church. You assume to yourself the power of setting aside these her jealous restrictions, and use this form of absolution indiscriminately for all persons, whether sick or well, whether specially troubled with any weighty matter, and on this ground, humbly and heartily deserving it or not. Because the very rare exception is allowed, you claim the right of making the exception the rule, and of turning the special permission into a general licence. How would it fare with law, government, or discipline in general, if such a principle as this were universally acted upon?

"You plead, however, the exhortation in the Service for the Holy Communion as your further authority; but the passage you refer to does in fact contain the most direct refutation of your practice. For, in the first place, the passage alluded to applies to those only who cannot quiet their own consciences, in preparation for the Lord's Supper, by private exercises of penitence and faith, but *require* further comfort and counsel; and, instead of supplying you with any form of absolution of human composition, it directs you to afford them the benefit of

absolution *by the ministry of God's Holy Word*, by pointing out to the troubled in conscience those numerous passages in Holy Writ, which give assurance of pardon and absolution to all who heartily believe, and truly repent; such, for instance, as the four texts which immediately succeed the absolution in the Communion Service. Secondly, the special directions given for the particular case, clearly contradict the notion that our Church countenances any system of periodical private confession to a priest; for the directions would be entirely superfluous if habitual confession were contemplated as the rule and not the exception.

“Then you have recourse to another argument (but the necessity of resorting to such a plea shows the extreme weakness of your cause), and you plead that the persons who come to you for private confession and absolution are *sick*—sick in mind and at heart; and, therefore, to be included among those to whom the Church will allow you to use the form of absolution for the Visitation of the Sick. That such persons are in a morbid state of mind is indeed most true; seeing that they fail to derive sufficient assurance of God's power and will to pardon them, when they hear the word of pardon and absolution pronounced in church by Christ's appointed minister, but must needs come and crave that pardon in the closet and confessional of the priest. It is for you, as being under Christ, the physician of their souls, to bring such persons to a more healthy state of mind, and to apply the fitting remedy to their morbid condition, instead of encouraging it, and thus teaching them to undervalue the public form of absolution prescribed by our Church.

“If it really were, as you state, that the Church of England ‘strongly recommends’ such proceedings as yours, and if the passages from the learned divines whom you quote do really uphold the system at present pursued at St. Saviour's in this matter, why have you not attempted to show how consistently they acted up to the principles of the Church, and their own principles; what respect they paid to the strong recommendation of their Church; what powerful precedent you have found in their ministerial life for assembling your flock, both young

and old, periodically in your study, to pour forth, on their knees, their confession to you, and to receive from you the words of absolution? Surely the absence of all such precedent among the learned writers you quote, shows how erroneous is the interpretation you have put upon their language. For three centuries since the Reformation, have the clergy of the Church of England, as a body, renounced this Romish practice of periodical private confession; and it has been reserved for a few young and inexperienced ministers in our day, to venture on this most perilous path without any direction or authority from their Church, which would not have failed to lay down wise and well-considered rules to guide her ministers in this most difficult of all tasks, had she ever intended them to receive private confessions, otherwise than under the special circumstances of rare occurrence above alluded to.

“I take this occasion, therefore, to admonish you and all your coadjutors at St. Saviour’s, to confine yourselves in this matter to that which the Church of England distinctly authorizes. If you are invested with the ministry of reconciliation, and are, in that capacity, commissioned to administer absolution, you should remember that while your Church invests you with the commission, she at the same time prescribes to you the mode of exercising it. She gives you specific directions as to the two occasions on which you may receive private confessions and pronounce private absolution, and to these occasions I hold you, as a dutiful son of your Church, bound to limit yourself, and to abandon totally your present avowed system.”

On the receipt of this letter, Mr. Minster distinctly promised unreserved obedience to its injunction.

Another complaint made to me regarding St. Saviour’s, was on the subject of the erection of a tombstone in the churchyard, with a prayer for the soul of the deceased inscribed upon it, notwithstanding my refusal to allow of a prayer for the dead, in the case of the communion plate. I pointed out to Mr. Minster the animus of the Church of England, as evinced by the omission of the prayer for the dead, at the end of the prayer

for the Church militant, and the substitution of praise on behalf of those who had departed in the faith, as well as by other considerations, expressing, at the same time, my own disapproval of the erection of tombstones with prayers for the dead upon them. Mr. Minster pointed to the Wolfrey case in proof that the Church of England did not condemn such a practice; otherwise, as he argued, the Bishop of Winchester would have been allowed to remove the gravestone in the above-mentioned case. This, then, was my second protest against an evidently systematic attempt to establish precedents for this repudiated practice.

In the beginning of the year 1850, a representation was made to me, that, notwithstanding the order given at the time of the consecration of the church as to the place where the prayers should be said, and the position of the minister, under two different contingencies, as above stated, the prayers were constantly said by the minister facing the east, in front of the chancel screen, with his back turned to the congregation; and that, in many instances, he was in consequence inaudible or unintelligible. It was also stated that the large cross over the rood screen had been put up, although, as above observed, it had been forbidden. On remonstrating with Mr. Minster on these two points, he pleaded to the latter, that the order for its erection was given by a curate in his absence, while ignorance was pleaded as to the original prohibition; and, as to the former, to my great surprise, Mr. Minster asserted that the prayers were so said before he became incumbent, and he believed had always been so said, since the consecration. I expressed my great displeasure and deep concern to find so strong a spirit of self-will and insubordination prevailing at St. Saviour's, and repeated the order respecting the place and position of the minister in saying prayers. Mr. Minster pleaded *custom*; and said his people would be greatly unsettled and shaken, were the present arrangements and mode of carrying on the services to be reversed; adding, he must throw all the responsibility on me, should any ill effects arise from changes in the established customs of the place—customs be it observed, and arrangements of very short standing, in contradiction to my express

previous orders. I replied, that I was quite willing to undertake the responsibility, and insisted upon the change as to the mode of saying the prayers. In the spring of 1850, I was informed that a very unusual mode of performing the Baptismal Service existed at St. Saviour's; that the whole clergy present, with the choristers, walked down in procession to the font (at the proper time for baptism), the boys bearing lighted tapers in their hands; and that, after the administration of the sacrament, they returned in the same order, singing the *Nunc Dimittis* as they walked up the church again. Mr. Crawley was then in charge of the church, Mr. Minster having been absent for some months on account of ill health; and the statement was referred by Mr. Minster to him. Mr. Crawley pleaded the additional solemnity given to the sacrament by this ceremony,—its impressive effect, and urged that it was no light thing to disturb the minds of the people by a change. I required that there should be no candles, and no *Nunc Dimittis* in procession. Mr. Crawley promised the orders should be duly attended to.

About the same time I visited St. Saviour's; finding the outer door of the church open, I walked up to the chancel door; this I found locked, though an express prohibition had been formerly given against keeping it locked. Ignorance of this prohibition was pleaded by Mr. Crawley.

Some of the above particulars may, perhaps, seem trifling to those who do not look beyond the surface; they are, however, mentioned, not only as indicative of what I could not but consider a determination to carry out a particular system of their own, as far as possible, irrespective of their Bishop's representations and remonstrances; but as significant of a deeper meaning, which meaning is distinctly at variance with the doctrine of the Church of England: and therein consists the importance of watchfulness in these particulars. For this reason also have I found it very necessary to be vigilant, because it seems to be the principle of the clergy of St. Saviour's, to introduce some unusual practice or ceremony without the knowledge of the Bishop, to carry it on as long as they can, and when it is discovered, to plead *custom* and the danger of impairing

devotional feelings. The justice of my apprehensions have been fully illustrated by their subsequent open defection.

After this repeated experience of their conduct, I felt myself compelled to say, in a communication which I made to Mr. Crawley, in June, 1850, that the proceedings of the clergy of St. Saviour's were of such a character as to destroy all my confidence in them; and that their study seemed to be how far they could evade their Bishop's known wishes, without violating the letter of the law.

In October, 1850, the anniversary of the consecration of St. Saviour's church took place, and a number of clergymen assembled there for the commemoration of it. It appears that they had a discussion as to the present position of the Church of England, and among other resolutions adopted unanimously by the twelve there met together, were the two following:—

“That the very existence of the English Church involves the principle of her submission, in matters of faith to the Church Catholic.”

“That her national history, previous to the Reformation, indicates that such submission can only be made through the medium of the Papal See.”

These resolutions threw no small light upon the tendencies of the clergy of St. Saviour's.

Not long after this, the first communication was made to me on those matters which led to the recent proceedings. I was already engaged in preliminary inquiries as to the reports which I had heard of objectionable practices at St. Saviour's, when I received an address from a large majority of the clergy of Leeds, requesting me to institute inquiries into the doctrines and practices then prevailing at St. Saviour's church. I accordingly notified to the complainants, as well as to the St. Saviour's clergy, that I would attend at the vestry of the parish church, on Friday, the 13th of December, at twelve o'clock, to hear any charges that might be preferred, and give the St. Saviour's clergy an opportunity of refuting them.

Now the clergy of St. Saviour's are stated by Mr. Beckett to have joined in requesting me to “issue a commission of

inquiry (under the Church Discipline Act, I presume), before which witnesses might be examined, and the truth found out." But this was not a case for a commission of inquiry. The charges affected the curates of St. Saviour's and another clergyman who was officiating there by permission, but without licence; and the proper mode of proceeding was under 1 and 2 Victoria, c. 106, sec. 98; which empowers the Bishop, "after having given to the curate sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary, to revoke summarily, and without further process, any licence granted to any curate, and to remove such curate for any cause which shall appear to such Bishop to be good and reasonable, provided always that any such curate may, within one month after service upon him of such revocation, appeal to the Archbishop of the province, who shall confirm or annul such revocation, as shall appear to him just and proper." It was quite competent to me, therefore, to have satisfied myself that the charges were well founded, and then to have issued the notice of the intended revocation, unless the parties accused could show reason to the contrary. It seemed to me, however, the fairest mode of proceeding, to give the accused the opportunity of confronting and cross-examining the accusers before any notice of the intended revocation was issued, as well as the opportunity of showing cause against the revocation between the issue of the notice, and its final execution;—and this was the course adopted. The request for inquiry from the body of Leeds clergy was agreed to on Monday, the 9th of December last; the following week I was to be engaged in the examination of candidates for holy orders, and the week after was Christmas week. I deemed it painful to the parties concerned to postpone the inquiry till the beginning of the year, and therefore resolved to devote Friday, the 13th, and Saturday, the 14th, to this object, giving due notice to the several parties that I should attend at the vestry of the parish church at twelve o'clock on the former of these days. I repaired thither, accordingly, accompanied by my deputy registrar, Mr. Teale, whom I wished to be present, not only to assist me in taking minutes of the proceedings, but also to see that the examination

of the several witnesses was conducted in conformity with the usual practice in legal inquiries ; and I may conscientiously assert that his presence on the occasion was at least as favourable to the clergy of St. Saviour's, as to the adverse party. The fullest opportunity was afforded them for cross-examining each adverse witness ; and for producing as much testimony on their own side as they pleased. The one witness, Mrs. ———, on whom I grounded the charge against Mr. Rooke and Mr. Beckett, was about two hours under examination ;—that examination was divided between the latter part of one sitting and the opening of the second, so that there was an intervening evening for devising the means of shaking her evidence. Every attempt was made, but in vain, to invalidate her simple straightforward testimony ; and no imputation was ever cast upon her general integrity. At the close of the second day, after the sittings had lasted in all ten hours, I announced my willingness to return to Leeds on the Monday, in order to give the accused party every opportunity of producing further evidence if they wished it. But, being informed by Mr. Minster, that the remaining witnesses were to prove that confession was not made *indispensable* prior to the reception of the Holy Communion, I said I would take that for granted, and would assume that many were allowed to communicate without having gone to confession, and received absolution previously. It was then agreed on both sides that the examination should terminate ; and I distinctly stated, that if my offer to resume it were declined, the evidence under consideration must be considered as closed on both sides ; it being, at the same time, left open to Mr. Minster and his curates to address to me any letter they pleased, by way of final reply. Before I left the room, Mr. Minster was the first to tender to me spontaneously his thanks for the part I had taken.

Having duly weighed the whole evidence, I considered that the testimony of Mrs. ——— by itself, and apart from that of any other witness, placed in the clearest light the system pursued at St. Saviour's in respect of confession, and it is here subjoined :—

M—— A——, the wife of —— ———.

“ We have resided in the parish of St. Saviour's five years next

February. I was a candidate for confirmation in the year 1849. Mr. Rooke and Mr. Beckett instructed me before my confirmation. After I had been under Mr. Rooke's instruction he directed me to go to Mr. Beckett, that I might confess to Mr. Beckett. I went to Mr. Beckett accordingly. He asked me my commandments. He asked me to think over what I had done, what sins I had committed; and he asked me if I had been disobedient to my parents, and if I had ever been running out at nights, and caused my parents uneasiness on that account. He then asked me if I had had any indecent connexion with any young men, and if I had had any thing to do with any person but my husband, and if I had had any thing to do with my husband before I was married to him. I made a confession to him of such sins as I could remember to have committed. He then replied he was sorry, and would pray for me. He told me to kneel down, and he would absolve me. I knelt down, when Mr. Beckett held his hands over my head, and, in doing so, he touched me, which alarmed me, and I jumped up. He said to me, 'Don't be alarmed, I won't hurt you.' I knelt down, and he then said he would give me a blessing. I thought I heard him saying something to himself, but I could not distinguish any words. When I rose up from my knees Mr. Beckett shook hands with me, and I left the room. It was in the middle room, called Mr. Minster's room. Before this happened, Mr. Rooke had told me that he was not a priest, and that I was to go to Mr. Beckett to absolve me; that was the reason of my going to him at that time. I felt very much ashamed of the questions put to me by Mr. Beckett, and was greatly distressed. I never told my husband to this day what were the questions which Mr. Beckett had asked me. Shortly afterwards Mr. Rooke came to our house, and told me he was about going to the Bishop of Ripon to be made a priest. He told me I was to prepare myself for confession, and that I was to go and confess to him when he returned, that I might take the sacrament on Christmas-day. I had not been to Mr. Rooke before he called upon me. I did not call upon him on his return. He came to our house, and asked me the reason why I had not been to con-

fess to him. I said I had been to dine at my mother's on Christmas-day. He asked me if I had been to the sacrament. I told him I had not. He called upon me one day shortly afterwards, but some person being in the house, he asked me to go down to the vicarage. I went down to the vicarage the same night about seven o'clock. We had a good deal about confession. I told him my husband did not hold with confession, and would not allow it. He said I must think about it myself. I replied, That I thought if a person confessed to God Almighty it was sufficient. He said he and the other clergymen were set there to teach us. I replied, I did not believe any one could forgive sins but God Almighty. He then asked me if I believed the Testament? I said, I did. He then said, Had I never looked at that portion of Scripture in which our Saviour, before he ascended into heaven, gave his disciples power to forgive sins? I said, Yes; but I thought our Lord only gave them that power because they had dwelt with Him upon earth, and I did not believe any body had that power now. He replied, Oh, yes, if our sins are ever so great, and they were confessed humbly, they (meaning, as I supposed, himself and their clergymen) were able to forgive them. Mr. Rooke was apparently offended with me, and I told Mr. Beckett so, and afterwards Mr. Rooke called upon me again. Upon one occasion, the last but two or three, Mr. Rooke said, You must not think when you come to confess to me that you come to a man like yourself, but to confess to God Almighty, they being set there as chosen by Him. I never went to confession after the first time. I never came to holy communion except immediately after my confirmation. The reason why I did not do so was, that I had understood from Mr. Rooke that they did not admit persons to holy communion except they had previously confessed a day or two before. At the time I told my husband I had been to confession he was displeased, and I mentioned it to Mr. Rooke; he replied, I had no right to tell any body I had been to confession. I told him I thought we ought to tell our husbands every thing. He said, True, they should not be deceived; but confession was a thing we ought not to tell them—it concerned our souls, and not our bodies. I told

Mrs. Hardisty, either the same night or the next morning after I had confessed to Mr. Beckett, the questions that had been put to me. I was much distressed."

Cross-examined by Mr. Rooke.

"I had been ill before my confession to Mr. Beckett. I was very miserable when I came away. I did not feel relieved in my mind after confession. I cannot say I felt a weight off my mind. I did not feel as I hoped to have done after what you had said. I thought I should have felt as a new person. I was unhappy on account of the questions which had been put to me."

Cross-examined by the Rev. Thomas Minster.

"Did you at the time of confession feel more deeply than before?"

"I cannot say that I felt that I was any more pardoned by confession."

"Did you not at your confession and before shed many tears?"

"I shed many tears to think over the crimes I had done and the questions put to me."

"Did those questions make you think much of your sins?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever feel your sins so much before?"

"No, sir; I had never thought of all these sins so much before."

"It seems, then, that these questions created in you a feeling of sorrow and repentance?"

"I felt troubled, and was anxious to know whether I had done right in confessing to man or not."

"Did you feel, then, at the time much sorrow and repentance?"

"Yes; I felt sorry for my sins, but not that true repentance I ought to feel."

"Seeing that you felt repentance and sorrow on these questions being put to you, you could not suppose that Mr. Beckett put these questions from an improper motive?"

"He never used any improper actions towards me, but the questions were very indelicate ones."

"Did he question you on the whole of the commandments?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you suppose those questions were put to you from an indelicate motive?"

"I hope not. I never saw any thing."

Cross-examined by Mr. Rooke.

"Did I ever tell you that confession was compulsory before coming to holy communion?"

"No, sir."

"Were you ever refused the holy communion because you had not previously come to confession?"

"By what you said to me I understood that I was not to come without confession."

"Did I recommend confession before coming to holy communion?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did I not state to you when once in your house, when talking of the difficulties of confession on your part, that it was better to come to holy communion without previous confession, rather than stay away from holy communion altogether?"

"I remember a conversation something to that effect. I did not understand that I was to go to communion without going to confession."

Now from this evidence, I gathered,

(1st) That Mrs. ——— offered herself as a candidate for confirmation in 1849, but never offered herself as a subject for the confessional.

(2nd) That after a certain period of examination, she was directed by Mr. Rooke to go to Mr. Beckett for confession and absolution.

(3rd) That Mr. Beckett received her under these circumstances, though not spontaneously offering herself, but being required so to do; and that he made her submit to confession, as well as to painful and indelicate questioning; that he then told her to kneel down, and that he would absolve her.

(4th) That Mrs. ——— was told by Mr. Rooke that she ought not to tell her husband that she had been to confession; still less to tell him what had passed in confession.

(5th) That Mr. Rooke pressed Mrs. — to go to confession, even after he knew that her husband disapproved of it.

(6th) That Mr. Rooke pressed her on the subject of confession in such a way, as to leave her under the impression that she never ought to go to holy communion without going to confession to a priest previously ; and that, in consequence, she never went to holy communion more than once, through dislike of confession.

Now that such has been the public teaching at St. Saviour's, is evident from the following extract from a sermon of the Rev. S. Rooke's, which was handed in to me during the investigation, and which I had an opportunity of perusing together with the evidence. Having enumerated other grounds of complaint preferred against the clergy of St. Saviour's, he (addressing the whole congregation) proceeds to say ; " Another grave charge brought against us is that we teach it to be a duty that you should confess your sins to your priest, by way of preparation for receiving the blessed sacrament and for dying, in order that you may receive the benefit and blessing of absolution. Even our good Bishop has asked with surprise if it be true that we do so—extraordinary to say ; why, of course it is true, how could it be otherwise ? In the Prayer Book, the Church puts the instruction into our very mouths ; for open your books at the first exhortation in the Communion Office, which begins, ' Dearly beloved, on — day next I purpose through God's assistance . . . ' and at the end of it the priest is commanded *to say to each of his flock*, ' Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution.' " It will not fail to be observed, that Mr. Rooke entirely omits all mention of the special circumstances and conditions, under which parties are to come to their minister.

Upon the above premises I inhibited Mr. Rooke, who was not licensed, from ministering any longer, either at St. Saviour's or in my diocese ; and I addressed the following letter to the Rev. H. F. Beckett, which led to the correspondence subjoined.

“Palace, Ripon, December 23, 1850.

“REV. SIR,

“Upon a careful review of the evidence laid before me during the recent investigation, I feel myself compelled by an imperative sense of duty to inform you, that unless you can show cause to the contrary, I shall, in ten days from this date, revoke your licence as curate of St. Saviour’s. I do this, because it appeared in evidence which you did not contradict, and could not shake by any cross-examination, that Mr. Rooke, who was then a deacon, having required a married woman who was a candidate for confirmation to go for confession to you as a priest, you received that female to confession under these circumstances, and that you put to her questions which she says made her feel very much ashamed and greatly distressed her, and which were of such an indelicate nature that she would never tell her husband of them.

“In this practice you ought to have known that you had no authority from your Church; and you could not fail to be aware that it was in direct opposition to an express written injunction on my part, sent to the vicar, with a desire that he would communicate it to his coadjutors at St. Saviour’s.

“I am desirous of assuring you, as I have already assured Mr. Rooke for his part, that I am very sensible of your zealous labours during the recent visitation of the cholera; but while this impression in your favour makes the present communication the more painful to me, it does not diminish the strong sense of duty which urges me to pursue the line of conduct I am adopting.

“I am, Rev. Sir,

“Your faithful friend and servant,

“C. T. RIPPON.

“Rev. H. F. Beckett.”

On Monday, the 30th of December, Mr. Beckett had an interview with me, which produced the following letter:—

“St. Saviour’s, Leeds, January 3, 1851.

“MY LORD,

“In the interview I had with your Lordship on Monday, you expressed a wish that I should state what I had to say in

writing. I now proceed, therefore, briefly to put before your Lordship the reasons for which I think you ought not to withdraw my licence as curate of St. Saviour's.

"Your Lordship's charge against me (said to be founded on the evidence of Mrs. ——) is,—that I received her to confession, and asked her questions which, she says, made her feel very much ashamed and greatly distressed her, and which were of such an indelicate nature that she would never tell her husband of them. Your Lordship further says, that in this I ought to have known that I have no authority from my Church, and that I could not fail to be aware that it was in direct opposition to an express written injunction on your part sent to the vicar.

"Your Lordship is of course aware that I am not at liberty to speak of what occurred between myself and Mrs. ——, further than to state that I only asked her such questions as I thought necessary to enable her to see her true condition in the sight of Almighty God. 'To the pure all things are pure;' and I am very sure that my questions were so framed as not to suggest any impure thought to the mind of the penitent. Mrs. —— acknowledged before your Lordship that her shame and distress arose from the sense of her sinfulness, and although she afterwards tried to account for this sense of sin by her previous illness, it must have been evident to your Lordship and to any unprejudiced person, that she did so only to avoid the acknowledgment of any good she had derived from confession, though she had before allowed that she was benefited by it. Your Lordship cannot but see that Mrs. ——'s not mentioning what had passed between her and myself to her husband is nothing at all to the purpose, since no woman would, I suppose, ever tell her husband what had passed in her confession.

"I believe, my Lord, that I have full authority from the Church for every thing that I have done and taught during the three years I have been at St. Saviour's. I must be allowed to say, my Lord, that with the invitation to confession in the Exhortation to Holy Communion, and the express direction respecting it in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, it is not too much for us to think that we have express *authority* to hear

confessions from the Church. The asking of questions according to the discretion of the confessor, is, your Lordship must see, absolutely necessary to make confession of value to those who have recourse to it.

“Your Lordship gave express leave to Mr. Minster, for himself and curates, to hear the confession of sick persons, and of any who should come to them before communion. Your Lordship will also remember your direction to us respecting confirmation—to present no persons to you whom we did not believe to be resolved to live a Christian life, and prepared to come to communion immediately after. In preparing persons for confirmation I have had especial regard for this direction, and have treated them as preparing for their first communion. I consider, therefore, my Lord, that I was obeying your express injunction, rather than acting in direct opposition thereto, in receiving persons to confession before their confirmation.

“In conclusion, permit me, my Lord, again to state that my whole conduct and teaching at St. Saviour’s has been in strict accordance with the doctrine and discipline of the English Church. If your Lordship think otherwise, it seems to me that I should claim no more than that charitable consideration and fatherly protection which belong to your Lordship’s office, if I were to ask to be shown this before I am visited with your Lordship’s displeasure.

“Your Lordship put it to me as an alternative, on Monday, that either the practice of confession at St. Saviour’s must be stopped, or your Lordship resign your office. If this practice be, as I believe, according to the intention of the English Church, I leave it to your Lordship to conclude which of us ought to retire; and I cannot but add that it is a great injustice to me, and to the people to whom I minister, if I am to be thrust out of my position in this private way, without any proof that I have contravened the doctrine of the Church.

“I remain, my Lord,

“Your very faithful servant and son in Christ,

“H. F. BECKETT.

“To the Right Reverend
the Lord Bishop of Ripon.”

To this I replied in the following terms :—

“Palace, Ripon, 4th January, 1851.

“REV. SIR,

“In the admonition which I addressed to the clergy of St. Saviour’s in the year 1849, on the subject of confession, I desired them to confine themselves strictly in that matter to the two rare exceptions referred to in the Exhortation to the Holy Communion and in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick. You try to bring Mrs. ——’s case under the category of those who, being unable by the exercises of self-examination, confession to God, and repentance, to come to the holy communion with a quiet conscience, require further counsel or comfort, and spontaneously come to a minister to open their grief. The evidence clearly proves that Mrs. ——’s was not such a case, and that I was fully justified in saying that in that instance you had no authority from your Church, and were acting in direct opposition to an express injunction on my part.

“You misunderstood what I said on the subject of resigning my office. I said that I would rather resign my office than sanction of my own authority such a practice of confession as that in use at St. Saviour’s, as proved by Mrs. ——’s evidence.

“I see, therefore, no cause whatever for refraining from the revocation of your licence, which revocation I have signed and forwarded to Mr. Teale, at Leeds, by this post.

“I remain,

“Your faithful friend and brother,

“C. T. RIPON.

“Rev. H. F. Beckett.”

The revocation was accordingly served on Mr. Beckett, and also an inhibition forbidding him to minister in my diocese, which produced the following letter :—

“St. Saviour’s, Leeds, January 8th, 1851.

“MY LORD,

“Permit me to say that I do not ‘try to bring Mrs. ——’s case under the category of those who being unable by the exercises of self-examination, confession to God, and repentance,

to come to holy communion with a quiet conscience, require further counsel or comfort, and spontaneously come to a minister to open their grief.' I simply say, that it is within that category, and I think that the evidence does not at all show it to be otherwise.

"Mr. Rooke asked me whether I would hear Mrs. ——'s confession if she should come to me. I said I would. Mrs. —— came to me, and I heard her confession, knowing at the same time that she intended to come to holy communion on the next Sunday. I thought then, my Lord, and I yet think that I was acting clearly within your Lordship's injunction, and under the direction of the Church. With this impression I received your Lordship's letter of the 23rd ult. with great surprise. I am surprised, my Lord, that you should act towards me as you are acting, in a manner which I cannot but consider tyrannical and unjust. You have the power, my Lord, to revoke my licence, but in my conscience I believe that you are acting against the authority of the Church in using that power. I still hope that your Lordship will see this, and restore me to my position as curate of St. Saviour's.

"I remain, my Lord,

"Your very obedient servant and son in Christ,

"H. F. BECKETT.

"The Right Reverend
the Lord Bishop of Ripon."

The next communication I received from Mr. Beckett was a note enclosing a copy of the appeal which he had addressed to his Grace the Archbishop of York.

This appeal substantially rested on the objections taken by Mr. Beckett to Mrs. ——'s evidence. He did not, however, in the slightest degree, impeach the statements made by her, or invalidate the conclusions at which I had arrived respecting himself; so that while there really remained nothing therein for me to combat, the appeal itself served to establish, even yet more clearly than before, the justice of my inferences, by showing how reluctantly Mrs. —— went to confession; going only

because she was directed to do so, and that after some remonstrance. Perhaps Mr. Beckett might strive to argue that Mr. Rooke merely *advised* her to go to confession, while Mrs. ——'s expression is that he *directed* her to go. What shape Mr. Rooke's advice would probably assume, may be judged of by referring to his positive teaching on the subject of confession in the passage quoted above from his sermon, as well as from the way in which, as Mrs. —— states repeatedly in her evidence, he pressed her to confession, and in such terms as led her to believe that she ought not to go to holy communion without previous confession. In reference to this subject, the following address to Mr. Minster and his reply will, I think, clearly show that such views of confession, so extensively entertained among the parishioners of St. Saviour's as they are represented to be in these documents, could not have been produced merely by the public reading of the Exhortations to the Holy Communion, or by any teaching that would be consistent with the injunction contained in my letter of January, 1849, to which obedience was promised by Mr. Minster. The way in which that promise was evaded, will sufficiently appear from the reply of Mr. Minster. And the two documents taken in connexion with the evidence of Mrs. —— and the passage from Mr. Rooke's sermon will strongly support the conclusion at which I had before arrived, that a system of private confession and absolution unknown in the Church of England since the Reformation until the present day, must have been studiously inculcated and practised at St. Saviour's.

TO THE REVEREND THOMAS MINSTER, M.A., VICAR OF
ST. SAVIOUR'S, LEEDS.

“REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

“We, the undersigned, have a few subjects on which we desire to express ourselves in real earnest to you, at this time when we seem on the point of losing blessings which cannot be compensated to us ; we mean the blessings we have

been granted as members of your congregation, and communicants of your Church.

“It might seem that we ought to address ourselves to the Bishop of the diocese, at this distressing time, to whom, as our chief pastor, we have been taught to look for guidance and support in all spiritual difficulties. We hope our not doing so will not be taken amiss ; but on a former occasion we tried to approach his Lordship, and felt that we were not understood. We know that it is not the great distance in point of temporal rank, between his Lordship and us, which would of itself deprive us of his sympathy ; for the especial kindness and tenderness of his ministry to other poor is well known to us. But, indeed, dear Sir, the hearts of men of every rank, when they are sorely wounded and depressed as ours are, need to open themselves to some one who cares to enter into their religious feelings, and to understand what are their principles and convictions. You we have known, sir, and you know us, and to you, therefore, we wish to express very plainly what we now think and feel.

“From the consecration of St. Saviour’s to the present time, we have been increasingly conscious of the presence among us of that sacramental religion, which, though we had known, we had not so fully realized before.

“We do not allude exclusively to what has so greatly edified, so deeply taught us, brought home the truths of religion so clearly and practically—the striking and significant ritual of your Church, and its devotional appearance ; but we allude further to the careful training we have received in that which really is the inward life of what goes on before our eyes. The solemnity connected with your ordinary administration of Holy Baptism, has seemed nothing else to us than the necessary consequence of the doctrine which you and our other pastors have been the instruments of God’s inworking in our souls, viz., that in that sacrament we are regenerate and born anew, grafted into the body of our Lord, and made the children of God. It has but fulfilled, in some measure, the gracious purpose of reminding us that we received, in our baptism, the gift of the regenerate nature, and experienced in our own persons the fruitfulness of the Incarna-

tion of the Son of God. Thus we have been saved from much of the disquietude which the gainsayers of this doctrine have occasioned, by having been ourselves carried into its truth fully, clearly, and habitually. For, secondly, you taught us that it followed, as a necessary consequence, that creatures so allied to a 'Divine Nature,' needed a supply of nourishment, of the same nature, to sustain and give growth to that of which they had partaken. We learnt, accordingly, to believe that in the sacrament of the Eucharist we are fed with the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it has been our inestimable privilege to adore, not the elements of bread and wine, but his presence in them.

"One other subject we feel called upon, by certain late proceedings, to speak of:—it is the subject of confession. We dwell upon this the more earnestly, because many of us have felt the unutterable relief which our Lord has authorized his priesthood to confer on the contrite. We have no wish to judge those who are not yet prepared thus to avail themselves of the ministry of reconciliation; but we do most earnestly protest against the unwarrantable attempt of strangers to take from us that which we esteem a most essential portion of our baptismal birthright. We complain of the means which have been used to obtain information respecting our private practices in this particular, visits and inquiries to which persons of higher rank would not have been exposed. We complain, also, of the manner in which witnesses were examined, some of whom are of so worthless a character that we cannot but feel indignant that their evidence should have been allowed to weigh against persons whose office is so sacred, and whose character is so irreproachable.

"We say that we have had full confidence in our pastors, and we are sure that their conduct has been such as to justify our confidence, and to encourage all whom God has so called to unburden the load of sorrow which your faithful teaching has taught them to discern in a conscience guilty of deadly sin.

"And as, day by day, that teaching has led us to enter deeper into ourselves, to hate sin, to love righteousness, to seek cleansing for our souls when the reception of our blessed Lord would

otherwise be to them condemnation, so that such reception might become health, strength, and perseverance to eternal life, so does the present unkind (at least to us unkind) attack upon this doctrine and practice, make it imperative on us to pray that neither the one nor the other may be removed from among us. We know you have not obliged us to submit to confession, but we solemnly protest against its being placed out of the reach even of those who have not yet been prompted to seek it. And we hereby affirm that a life of confession once begun is too precious to be broken off without the greatest injury; perchance, alas! even the ultimate ruin of the soul. In this respect, then, we earnestly appeal to your well-known and tried sympathy with us. We have gone on a course which *cannot* be given up without sorrow and loss.

“And insignificant as the world may think us, we yet feel we have a right to claim what you have so truly taught us is, as Catholics, our birthright. We earnestly trust that, even if we are deprived for a time of the public ministrations of our pastors, they will not wholly desert us, but will continue to afford us access to this needful blessed ordinance which we cannot now think of losing.

“Though we have reason to suppose that the number of communicants at St. Saviour’s, if not larger, is quite as large, in proportion to the population of the parish, as that of any church in the immediate neighbourhood, yet, doubtless, we are very few in comparison with the multitude in Leeds, who either have no religion, or only such as teaches them to regard ours with hatred and contempt, to deny what we believe, and to ridicule what we revere. Our entreaties, therefore, that our Christian privileges may be continued to us, may easily be drowned in the clamour of those in whose sight such privileges are superstitious, hateful, and degrading. We are poor, also, and cannot, therefore, ask you and your fellow-labourers, who willingly share with us the lot of poverty, to defend our privileges in the Church’s courts; though such a course, were it open to us, would be joyfully embraced, not merely as a duty, but with all the anticipations of

success which the most perfect confidence in the righteousness of our cause could give. We are also powerless, without station, influence, or any other means of causing our sense of the injury done us to be felt : we may, therefore, be trampled on with impunity ; we have not the weapons, even if we could use them, of those who boast themselves against us ; our complaints have no sting for those who stand well with the world ; they do but express the helpless anguish of our hearts. Yet we cannot forget that numbers are no test of truth in the sight of God ; that the prayer of the poor entereth into his ears, and He will not despise their cry : and that out of weakness He has been pleased, in times past, to bring forth strength.

“ We shall not cease, therefore, to pray Him to have mercy on us ; to turn the hearts of those who have slandered us, and the ministry to which we owe so much ; and to preserve us, in such way as seemeth best to Him, the blessings which we humbly confess we have neither used nor valued as we ought.

“ We shall pray for you also, dear sir, and for our other dear pastors, whom we love in the Lord, and from whom we still trust, if it be his holy will, that we shall not even yet be separated. And whether in tribulation or in joy, we shall ever be

“ Yours, in grateful affection, &c.”

Signed by 660 persons, of whom about 220 are communicants¹.

THE VICAR'S REPLY.

“ Markington Grange, Jan. 9th, 1851.

“ MY DEAR FRIENDS,

“ I need not say that I am deeply gratified by the kind and touching address which you have sent me. Your firmness,

¹ Of the numbers here stated by Mr. Minster, there were 249 who could not sign their names ; of the rest, the great majority appeared to be of such class, in point of education, that they must have been unable to comprehend the document they were invited to sign ; and still less competent to have composed it.

moderation, and devotion to Catholic truth, in the heavy trial which has come upon us, afford me a comfort greater even than that which I derive from so timely a proof of your affection to your pastors. If you continue firm, moderate, and faithful, there is room to hope, even yet, that our sorrow shall be turned into joy.

“One topic in your letter requires a particular expression of my sympathy. I refer to the remission of sins after confession, which you truly call a portion of your baptismal birthright.

“It is right that you should understand fully how the Bishop’s authority on this point has been exercised. In 1849 his Lordship enjoined the clergy of St. Saviour’s to confine the practice of confession, among their people, to the two cases of persons intending to communicate and sick persons. It was possible to understand the Bishop’s words in the former of these cases, in such a sense as would permit the clergy to receive the confession of any earnest-minded person who would wish to make it, and the clergy thought it only dutiful to his Lordship to do so. But the result of recent proceedings establishes the fact that the Bishop intended us not to receive the confessions of any in health, unless they actually were deterred from coming to holy communion by a sense of their sins, even though it might be that they ought to have been so deterred, or again had not of themselves thought of holy communion at all. It follows as one consequence of such intention, that in the worst of all cases (that, namely, in which men living in sinful forgetfulness of God are ignorant of the duty of communicating), his Lordship would have us neither recommend nor receive confession (whatever impression in the providence of God may have been made upon the sinner’s soul), except in the solitary and rare instance of a sick-bed repentance. He makes bodily sickness a necessary condition to the use of this divinely-appointed means of grace on the part of those who are sick in soul.

“Another effect of the Bishop’s intention is to deprive of confession those devout communicants who greatly desire it, because their own experience testifies the blessedness of its regular and

systematic use, and whose apprehensions at the thought of losing it you express when you say that ‘a life of confession once begun is too precious to be broken off without the greatest injury, perchance, alas! even to the ultimate ruin of the soul.’ In the desire of such persons for the continuance of confession, and their fears if they withdraw from it, I need scarcely say that I entirely sympathize. But how are we to deal with the interposed authority of our Bishop? If he is right in treating the directions of the Church of England, not as instances of, but as rare exceptions to, her own rule on the subject, then indeed his Lordship will have done much to make our course clear. For then he will have proved that the Church of England, substituting for the Catholic rule a false one of her own, denies to her members what our Lord Himself, in Holy Scripture and by the voice of his universal Church, has provided for the souls of such as need it; and then it will be my duty to endeavour, as well by word as by example, to lead you to seek elsewhere that great gift, the denial of which by our Church would of itself destroy her claim to be your guide. But if the Bishop is wrong (*as we fully believe he is*) in supposing that the Church of England does not in this particular follow the rule of the Church universal, then we have to perform the more difficult duty of so dealing with his authority as not to contradict or disobey that of our Church.

“I shall, with pleasure, transmit your address to the Bishop, with a copy of my answer, and shall inform his Lordship that I join in your complaint relative to the unfairness of the investigation with regard to the clergy of St. Saviour’s¹.

“The sickness with which it has pleased God to visit me alone hinders me from being among you, and consulting with you, in this trying emergency. As it is, I can but commit you and those who have been hitherto my fellow-labourers among you—whom you have, in my judgment, most wisely and pro-

¹ The inconsistency between this statement on the part of Mr. Minster, and his tender of thanks to the Bishop, at the conclusion of the investigation, cannot fail to be remarked.

perly entreated not to desert you—to the protection and guidance of Him who careth for you. In whom I remain,

“Your ever affectionate pastor,

(Signed) “THOMAS MINSTER.

“To the parishioners of St. Saviour’s,
communicants, and other members
of the congregation.”

There yet remains one point in Mr. Beckett’s appeal which I must not omit to notice. He stated that there were several denials and exculpations given by himself and his fellow-curates which were not put down as part of the evidence, and upon this he founded a request that his Grace the Archbishop of York would grant a fresh hearing in his case. But it is evident that such denials as Mr. Beckett alludes to do not form a part of evidence, and therefore ought not to have been inserted in the minutes. It is not enough for the accused party simply to deny the truth of an assertion; he should prove its falsehood, either by the cross-examination of the adverse witness, or by producing a fresh witness or witnesses on his own side. Yet, in truth, I did in my own mind allow the simple denial of one of the accused parties to counterbalance the lengthened testimony of one of the witnesses, as I think *that* accused party could not fail to have perceived. But Mr. Beckett did not, and could not, assert that any such alleged denials and exculpations had reference to the evidence of Mrs. ——. The complaint is, therefore, futile as regards the only evidence on which I grounded my proceedings.

In conclusion, I would observe, that there were various concurrent circumstances in the present case which called unquestionably for promptness and decision in dealing with it. In the course of the investigation, or, at any rate, before the date of my letter to Mr. Beckett of the 23rd December, I had the most convincing proof that the system of confession, as practised at St. Saviour’s, was but part of a *general* system there carried out, which, if allowed to proceed unchecked, would over-ride the Reformation of the 16th century, and turn the Articles of our Church into a dead letter. Strong as my

convictions on this subject might have been before, I never could arrive at such tangible proofs of it as have recently been discovered. The following is a summary of the doctrines which I now ascertain to have been preached and taught at St. Saviour's within the last few months, and of which I have written evidence under the hands of the preachers.

- 1.—That it is the duty of each member of the congregation to go to a priest for confession and absolution before he receives the holy communion.
- 2.—That there are seven sacraments of the Church.
- 3.—That the communion table is the throne of God, and the Lord's Supper is the sacrifice of the altar.
- 4.—That no one can be considered a faithful minister or member of the Church who does not preach or practise the duty of praying for the souls of individuals departed, that Jesus may have mercy on them.
- 5.—That the great misery of the sinner is losing the intercession of the saints and the aid of the sacrifice of the altar (no mention being made of the intercession of the one Mediator between God and man).
- 6.—That penance is the means of forgiveness of actual deadly sin.
- 7.—That deadly sin, after baptism, must end in spiritual death, unless penance be resorted to, and unless persons confess their sins to one of Christ's physicians, by which is meant, a priest.
- 8.—That, after the consecration of the elements, the bread is no longer bread, the wine no longer wine—but the body and blood of Christ: (a statement made by the Rev. G. L. Crawley, for which his licence was revoked, and he did not appeal).

And the clergy of St. Saviour's practically carrying out this teaching, did, last year, celebrate with extraordinary solemnity the Romish festival of Corpus Christi.

I may also add, as I have before stated, that from St. Saviour's, in the autumn of last year, there issued an invitation to yield submission to the Pope.

I could not, then, consider the conduct of Mr. Beckett, in his dealing with the confession of Mrs. —, as an isolated act, to be viewed by itself, but as connected with a variety of other circumstances, justifying and demanding decisive measures. I am quite conscious that I incurred a deep responsibility in adopting the course on which I resolved; but it was a responsibility imposed upon me by the laws of the Church and realm, and I could not shrink from its exercise. I counted the cost: I well weighed the issue on either side, and I deliberately came to the conclusion, that no alternative was left me save to act as I have done: dealing with each of the parties concerned according to the differing features of their several cases. In Mr. Beckett's I deal with the case of confession, wherein I certainly hold that what may justly be termed *moral compulsion* has been used; and, if in this instance I had hesitated to have recourse to a decided measure, I must knowingly and wilfully have sanctioned the establishment in my own diocese of a system, which, however seductive it may seem to morbid and sensitive minds, however satisfactory its results may appear for a short season, is essentially destructive of the peace of families, and saps the foundations of morality among nations. There is here no question of a little more latitude in this or that direction within the recognized limits of the Church of England: the question is, whether Romish doctrine, ritual, and practice shall supplant those of our own Church; whether our Reformation shall be sacrificed to an extravagant abuse of private judgment, which takes upon itself to pronounce what is Catholic and what is not, and insists upon distorting the natural sense of our Articles, if it seem at variance with the private interpretation which some individual puts on certain passages in the Fathers.

I cannot conclude without asserting that I entirely acquit Mr. Beckett, as well as the St. Saviour's clergy in general, of any depraved motives in adopting the line of questioning proved to have been followed in confession; and I willingly tender to them all my cordial thanks for the self-denying zeal which they, in common with the clergy of Leeds in general, manifested during the late visitation of the cholera. At the same time, this exemplary conduct cannot blind me to the peril of the course they have

been pursuing. Again and again have I warned them of its probable issue, but in vain. I deplored their infatuation, and the consequences which I knew must ensue from their self-will and insubordination; and I can with truth say, that the exertion of these acts of necessary discipline has cost me more pain than any I have ever been called upon to exercise. But the cup of suffering is filled by themselves, and they, in truth, are alone responsible for its bitterness.

C. T. RIPON.

THE END.





